

SUBMISSION

THE MILE-END FRANCOPHONE PROJECT

MARCEL VEILLEUX

DIRECTOR

April, 1972.

1. Title: The Mile End Francophone Project
2. Context: Situated in the centre of the city, the Mile-End is a disadvantaged area, bounded to the North by Van Horne, to the South by Pine Avenue, to the West by Hutchison and to the East by St. Denis. This area has a varied population of 71,500 people of which 58% are French-speaking.

Numerous studies carried out in the Mile-End by Federal, municipal and independent research agencies, have shown that 96% of the area's population consists of a non-specialized work force whose average annual salary for the head of the family is \$3,800. Closely related to the economic status of the population, the severe social conditions are significant indications of the difficult existence in which the population of Mile-End lives: 30% of the population lives on welfare and unemployment insurance; 40% of the families have a deficient diet; 55% of the dwellings, the majority of which were built before 1920, need immediate repair: 97% of the population has less than 7 years of schooling; 82% of the young people between the ages of 15 and 24 no longer go to school, and 3/4 of them live a life of idleness, since the job-market is unable to absorb them.

The rate of school dropouts in the Mile-End area is the highest in the Metropolitan area. of 2,460 registered as having left school prematurely in the C.S.C.M. during the 1970-1 school year, 1,092 came from two high schools in the area. Already this year, according to the principals of the two schools, 1,100 students have dropped out. Furthermore, a 20% daily absenteeism is a constant phenomenon in these schools.

The population is also exposed to a form of private exploitation by small traders who sell on credit at an extremely high rate of interest. Furthermore, Portuguese and Italian nationals are prey to the greatest form of exploitation through the local clothing manufactureres who do not respect minimum wage laws.

There seems to be very little local organisation centered on the family unit. There are several parish groups in existence which have spare-time activities as well as some charitable organisations which give assistance to families in greatest need. Generally, these organizations consider poverty on an individual basis. Confusing the basic characteristics of poverty with its causes, they reduce the problem of eliminating poverty to one of individual rehabilitation. Since they do not bring about any social improvement, this paternalistic intervention only creates feelings of guilt and frustration, or an attitude of marked dependence by individuals who have to face daily problems of living in an environment which can only be oppressing.

On the other hand, there exists in a section of the area, the Olier residents committee whose aim is to discover the area's known problems at the same time, in an adjacent parish there is another resident's committee which is trying to create an awareness of the problem through a newspaper. The action of these groups is very positive, but their efforts remain sporadic and are limited to their own parish area.

3. The Problem:

The greatest problem at the moment in the Mile-End area is that there is no social organization in existence to which the francophone population can resort for their social and economic problems. It follows from this that there is lack of essential services which would meet the needs of the population, as well as a deficiency of information on their rights. This state of social disorganization has created an apathetic population alienated from values and ideas of Canadian middle class society.

4. Theoretical Aspect of the Problem:

The economic and social conditions at the Mile-End: low wages, chronic unemployment, social assistance, miserable living conditions, the high percentage of delinquency and crime are all interdependent facts

which have contributed to the emergence of a particular way of life.

This cultural adaptation is a psychological reaction of the population faced with their inability to confront the problems and situations which daily exceed their limits of understanding. Fatalism and a low level of social ambition have become essential traits in the character of the francophone population of Mile-End. It is amongst these people that we find the highest percentage of people living on social assistance.

The effect that these psychological consequences have is to reinforce the prevailing social conditions in the area and to make the population settle further into the vicious circle of poverty . Unable to follow technical and economic progress and industrial society, they thus find themselves on the outside, condemned to a life out of step with modern society.

As a consequence, the objective of the project is therefore to promote a consciousness of their collective hardships and of the factors which have created their disadvantaged situation. The project will thus act as a rationalising agent to help the alienated and apathetic population to pass into the state of a community of conscious residents who are informed and capable of acting effectively on community problems which prevent development and blossoming of their collective future.

5. Specific Objectives:

Animation of the residents of the area:

1. To develop within the francophone community an organizational structure by which the residents will be able to control their collective future and transform their environment.

2. To develop a sense of community amongst the francophones.
3. To develop a solidarity within the community which will go above cultural and linguistic difference in the Mile-End population make-up.

B. Animation with the area's young people

1. To make the young people aware of their problems and to describe alternatives to them which would solve them.
2. To develop amongst the young people, a sense of community and civic responsibility.
3. To develop an organizational structure through which the young people may collectively express themselves and contribute positively to the collective welfare of the community.

6. Description of the Project:

A. Animation with the residents of the area.

Since there already exists a structure and community services centered on the Greek community which represents the majority of the anglophones of the Mile-End, the project, while maintaining close collaboration with the Federation of Greek Parents and affiliated groups, will be concentrated more particularly on the francophone community which represents 58% of the Mile-End population. This involves all those residents whose working language is French. The principal ethnic groups involved will be the French Canadians, the French, the Portuguese, the Italians and the Spanish.

Starting by joining the community together, the essence of the project will consist in involving all the residents concerned in transforming their environment through the method of community organization. This method will make the residents understand that they can in some measure exercise a control over their environment.

The method of achieving this objective will be to help the residents to define their problem and to develop the machinery to create solutions. This will make the way clear for collective action so that all resources.

The starting up of essential community services defined by the residents themselves; e.g. a local newspaper, legal aid service, a tenant's association etc., will be concrete forms by which the residents will experience feelings of fulfillment and unalienation. The confidence obtained by these experiences will change their attitude and help towards a consciousness of the possibilities of development.

The project must therefore ensure that the residents will profit from all situation where they can learn and develop a sense of community and that they will recognize the need to establish a permanent structure which will assure continuing social participation in community life.

B. Animation of the young people of the area

On the level of the young population, whose number is around 19,000, the symptoms of the ills occasioned by the environment are normalised in the form of a sub-culture. Drop-outs, the use of drugs, vagrancy, delinquency and crime are only a few of the characteristics of the problems of the young in Mile-End.

It is thus urgent, (since their problems are closely tied to the social and economic conditions of the community at large) to channel their energies in a positive and constructive way, opening the path to a collective action alongside the adult residents in order to transform their environment.

The method of social intervention will be the same as for the adult residents, as has been described in section A of the previous page.

Beginning with immediate problems, identified by the young people themselves, the social animators will help them to set up a series of services and programs which will answer their needs. It is from these services and programs that the young people will develop a greater understanding of the problems and their environment and will realise the possibilities of making changes as responsible citizens within the community life of the area.

7. Scope of the Project

The process of community development is a pattern for energetic intervention based on the active participation of aware residents to confront the problems of their community. In order to meet the fixed objectives, the project will have to last a period of 3 years.

8. Personnel

The project will need a staff of 4 social animators, a secretary and a director.

The specific functions of each will be as follows:

Director: He will be responsible for the direction and the smooth running of the project towards the defined objectives. His responsibilities will include administrative tasks. The editing of bi-monthly reports, and the supervision and coordination of the animators' work. He will also act as official representative to agencies and governments.

2 Animators working with the residents: AT first, they must establish contacts in order to mobilise those concerned and will act as organisers. One animator will work particularly with residents who want to set up essential community services. The second animator will occupy himself with residents concerned with the problems of work and consumer exploitation. He will also be responsible for making the residents aware of the problems connected with poor education in the community.

2 Animators working with young people:

Their function will be to make the young people aware of their problems and to help them to determine their specific objectives which will meet their needs, at the same time encouraging new behaviour. Each animator will be associated with a different element. This view is based on the natural division of the young population between students and other young people since these are distinct problems and needs.

1 Secretary: The secretary's function will be to undertake the daily responsibilities of the office, to help the director in his administrative tasks and to coordinate and give information about the project.

9. Administration

The project will be administered by the Department of Community Programs of the Montreal Y.M.C.A. Services will include book-keeping for the project.

As a member of this department, the director of the project will be responsible to the Montreal Y.M.C.A. On all occasions, as the residents committee develops, the director will be directly responsible to the latter.

10. Evaluation

The project will be evaluated by the personnel regarding its accomplishing of the fixed objectives within a specified date. The bi-monthly reports will be a comprehensive resumé of progress as well as the problems incurred. Weekly meetings between the members of the staff will assure continuity.

The project will be evaluated further by members of other community projects with the YMCA's Community Programs Department. This will afford a more objective view and assessment of the whole project.

Finally, machinery will be drawn up so that the residents of the area can evaluate the effectiveness of the project with reference to their problems and needs.

ANNUAL BUDGET

1. A. Staff

1 Director \$8000

4 Social animators 28000

@ \$7,000 each

1 Secretary 5000

41,000

B. General Expenses 3,075

\$44,075

2. Expense and transport

\$200 x 5 persons 1,000

3. Office Rentals 1,500

4. Office equipment & supplies 1,500

5. Rental of office equipment 500

6. Telephone 450

7. Administration 1,500

8. Professional Consultation 1,000

TOTAL

\$51,525.00